

## THE LEVEL OF PRINCIPALS' LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTES ENVISIONS THE LEVEL OF SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS IN NIGER STATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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### ABSTRACT

Principals' leadership attributes has been viewed among the essential variables in dealing with challenges and crises of the current secondary school set up, it serves as measure of improving the level of school effectiveness. However, there were scanty researches on the level of principals' leadership attributes. The purpose of this study is to find out whether principals' leadership attributes envisions the level school effectiveness in Niger state secondary schools. The study is survey and quantitative approach. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire, containing the items of Leader Attributes Inventory (LAI) and School Effectiveness Index (SEI). Leaders Attributes Inventory (LAI) was used to measure the principals' leadership attributes, while School Effectiveness Index (SEI) was used to measure the school effectiveness. Data were collected from 136 secondary schools in Niger state; from each school two highly experienced staffs were selected, thus determining the sample size to be 272. Descriptive analysis was used to measure the level of principals' leadership attributes and the level of school effectiveness. The findings indicated that, the level of principals' leadership attributes envision the level of school effectiveness in Niger state secondary schools. Therefore, to improve the level of school effectiveness in Niger state; It is prerequisite to emanate an extensive, systematic and rational program of improving the level of principals' leadership attributes, thus may improve the level of school of effectiveness.

**KEYWORDS:** Numerous Debates, Leadership

### INTRODUCTION

Effective leadership behaviors are imperative in contributing to student achievement and the overall school effectiveness. School leaders must mold the culture of the school in order to create an environment that may improve the level of school effectiveness (Hallinger, 1999; Marks & Printy, 2003). This study is concerned about the principals' leadership attributes and how it envisages school effectiveness in Niger state secondary schools. There have been numerous debates about whether principals' leadership attributes impact students' outcomes and school effectiveness or whether school effectiveness is related to other factors other than principals' leadership. Whichever is true, the fact remains that it is still a challenging to discuss school effectiveness considering the leadership attributes of the school principal. In addition, it would be difficult to find an educational researcher who do not believe that principals' leadership attributes are related to school effectiveness (Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004).

Principals' leadership attributes is possibly the most essential factor of an effective school (Kelley, Thornton, & Daugherty, 2005). The primary responsibility of a principal is to facilitate effective teaching and learning with the overall mission of improving student achievement. Education today requires a leader who is willing to foster student achievement in some of the most complex environments (Lehr, 2004; Lopez, 2010). In many organizations, leadership can greatly

influence its success or failure in ways in which the leader disseminates authority and power to influence the subordinate (Vera & Crossan, 2004). Principals frequently balance the interests of varying groups; therefore their Leadership also requires positive relationships with teachers and students to ensure the effectiveness of schools. Relationships are at the core of successful learning communities as well as school success (Robinson & UniServices, 2007).

This study aimed at explaining whether the level of principals' leadership attributes envisions the level of school effectiveness in Niger State Secondary Schools. Despite the role of principals' leadership attributes towards the school effectiveness, there were limited researches in such area; the conducted researches in such discipline are of less quality (Kelley et al, 2005). One of the elements of school effectiveness is quality school outcome. The substantial measure of school outcomes is students' achievement. In Niger state secondary schools, the academic achievements of students was not impressive (Herald, 2013). Therefore, in order to improve the level of school effectiveness, it is quite imperative to improve the level of principals' leadership attributes.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

School leadership appears to be relatively straightforward and simple in theory, in practice it is complex, confusing, and unpredictable. Successful principals acquire such leadership attributes that motivate their subordinates to higher levels of productivity, remedy poor performance and lead the school towards its objectives. Therefore Decent principals should be able to influence their subordinates towards the effectiveness of their schools (Herald, 2013). The concept of leadership attributes has attracted interest in business management for its relevancy in an organization. This concept has been applied to the education sector as a way of examining the general characteristics, skills and competency of the school principals (Gary, 2010).

In a highly structured organization such as a school with strong traditions supporting hierarchical authority, leadership is synonymous with the official position (Bottery, 2006). The leader in the secondary school, i.e. the principal, is a member of a group who helps to develop ways of interacting which facilitate achieving common goals. School is one of the most important organizations in society, established to achieve specific educational objectives. One of these objectives is to promote student learning and improve academic performance, which serves as means of measuring the school effectiveness (Ekundayo, 2010). According to the organizational development phase model, the culture and the organization of a school is influenced by its principal leadership. It is explained that, among the important factors related to better student achievements such as examination performance, are the leadership attributes of the principals and rules of the school (Ekundayo, 2010 ; Jones, 2002).

They further added that, the leadership attributes of the principal as an organizational leader in the school, plays an important role in bringing about outstanding scholastic performance, which are the main feature associated with effective schools. In study on four schools in the United States, found eight factors present in successful or effective schools. Among these factors were strong administrative leadership of the principals, high expectation for student achievement, positive school atmosphere and regular evaluation of student progress, but principals' leadership was found to be the key factor of school effectiveness (Clark, Martorell, & Rockoff, 2009). This study, employed senge model of educational leadership; that there are four major leadership attributes that enable educational leaders to lead well, rather than control, namely as follows: Engagement, system thinking, leading learning and self-awareness (Senge, 2000). Capital theory was also used in the study to provide a theoretical base for this study on school effectiveness. Capital theory

has four master concepts; it was developed by David Hargreaves in (2000). The four master concept includes the followings: Outcomes, leverage, intellectual capital and social capital (Hargreaves, 2001).

## METHODOLOGY

The study has been designed to examine whether the level of principals' leadership attributes envisions the level of school effectiveness in Niger State Secondary Schools. In this context, the study demands a descriptive analysis to measure the level of principals' leadership attributes and school effectiveness. This research was a survey method and it is a quantitative approach. The main tool for data collection of this study was questionnaires in the form of observing rating form, the instruments address, the demographic information of the respondents, leadership attributes expected from the principals and finally questions on school effectiveness. Principals' leadership attributes was measured with Leader Attributes Inventory (LAI), it was developed by Moss, Johanssen and Judith J. Lambrecht in (1991).

Leader Attribute Inventory was administered to determine the degree to which individuals possess each of 37 leadership attributes with Likert-type scale (Donald W. Knox, 2000). These 37 items of leadership attributes were categorized under the four major dimensions of Educational leadership attributes, which are Engagement, System thinking, Leading learning and Self-awareness. Researcher was permitted to use and adapt the instrument by the developer to suit the study. School Effectiveness Index (SEI) was used to measure the school effectiveness. The instrument was developed by Wayne K. Hoy, School Effectiveness Index (SE Index) is an 8-item Likert-type scale that provides a collective and subjective judgment of the overall effectiveness of the school (Wayne, 2005).

The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert type scale for the experienced teachers to rate their principal's leadership attributes and the effectiveness of the Niger state secondary schools by selecting one item out of the following options: Strongly disagree 1; Disagree 2; Moderately agree 3; Agree 4; Strongly agree 5. The researcher conducted a pilot study to determine the effectiveness and the workability of the instrument in the final study. The pilot study is comprised of 32 experienced teachers in Zone 'C' of Niger state and it provided the reliability co-efficient of 0.86. Therefore, the instrument is reliable to measure the Principals' leadership attributes and school effectiveness in the final study. The populations were 460, while the sample is 272 was selected from 230 secondary schools. Cochran formula was used to calculate the sample size with additional of 30%, because of the experience of the pass researchers; that is, it is very unusual for a researcher to obtain the exact number of distributed questionnaires, therefore there is need to add a certain percentage to cover up the percentage unreturned (Barlett, 2001). The subjects of this research work are principals of Niger state senior secondary schools who have been assessed by the highly experienced staff of their respective schools.

## Data Analysis

The study aimed at identifying the level of principals' leadership attributes and the level of school effectiveness through the teachers' perception in Niger state secondary schools. Data collected for the study was analyzed using SPSS software version 22, descriptive analysis was used to measure the level of principals' leadership attributes and the level of school effectiveness. It was obtained through calculating the mean, standard deviation, minimum, maximum and range. The level of principals' leadership attributes was determined by the level of its four dimensions, namely: Engagement, System thinking, Leading learning and finally Self-awareness. The following items were used to major the Engagement; energetic and stamina, visionary, tolerant of ambiguity and complexity, achievement oriented, ideological beliefs are appropriate to the group, adaptable, open to change.

System thinking was measured by the following items: problem solving, insightful, persistent, courageous risk-taker, organizing, conflict management, initiating. Leading learning was measured by the following items: dependable, reliable, even disposition, willing to accept responsibility, planning, ethics, communication (listening, oral, written), sensitivity, respect, motivating others, planning, delegating, team building, coaching, appropriate use of leadership style, information management. Finally, Self-awareness dimension has been measured through the following items; confident, accepting of self, enthusiastic optimistic, tolerant of frustration, commitment to the common goal, personal integrity, intelligent with practice judgment, networking, time management, stress management (Moss, 1991).

School effectiveness has been measured through the following dimensions, namely; students' outcome and teachers' leverage. Students' outcome is comprised of the following items; outcomes, intellectual capital, social capital and informing teachers about innovations that could positively affect students' achievements. Teachers' leverage has been measured with the following items, such includes the followings; leverage - the teachers in my school are working smarter to ensure a high level of students' achievements; when changes are made in the school, teachers accept and adjust quickly; teachers in this school anticipate problems and prevent them; teachers in this school use available resources efficiently. Below are the tables showing the mean, standard deviation and the level of each dimension in the principals' leadership attributes and school effectiveness.

**Table 1: Level of Principals' Leadership Attributes (n = 249)**

Dimensions	Level	Frequency	Percent	A/ mean	SD	Min.	Max	Range
<b>Engagement</b>	Low (1.67- 2.78)	58	23.3	<b>3.58</b>	0.78	1.67	5.00	3.33
	<b>Moderate (2.79 – 3.89)</b>	97	39.0					
	High (3.90 – 5.00)	94	37.8					
<b>System Thinking</b>								
	Low (1.57 - 2.71)	38	15.3	<b>3.51</b>	0.68	1.57	5.00	3.43
	<b>Moderate (2.72 - 3.85)</b>	133	53.4					
	High (3.86 - 5.00)	78	31.3					
<b>Leading learning</b>								
	Low (1.54 – 2.69)	34	13.7	<b>3.56</b>	0.74	1.54	5.00	3.46
	<b>Moderate (2.70 – 3.84)</b>	119	47.8					
	High (3.85 - 5.00)	96	38.6					
<b>Self-Awareness</b>								
	Low (1.730 – 3.31)	87	34.9	<b>3.53</b>	0.75	1.73	6.45	4.73
	<b>Moderate (3.32 – 4.89)</b>	157	63.1					
	High (4.90 – 6.45)	5	2.0					

The table above indicates the average mean value of all the dimensions of principals' leadership attributes (Engagement, system thinking, leading learning and self-awareness). The average mean value of the dimensions falls within the moderate level. The average mean value of Engagement is 3.58 and standard deviation is .78, which falls within the moderate level (2.79 – 3.89); the average mean value of System thinking is 3.51 and standard deviation is .68 which is within the moderate level (2.72 - 3.85); the average mean value of leading learning is 3.56 and standard deviation is .72, it falls within the moderate level (2.70 – 3.84); finally the mean value of self-awareness falls within the moderate (3.32 – 4.89). The above information is indicating that, there is moderate level of principals' leadership attributes in Niger state secondary schools as perceived by the experienced teachers. The level of school effectiveness is determined by the

level of the two dimensions of school effectiveness, namely: Students' outcomes and teachers' leverage. It's also been categorized ranging from low, moderate and high. Below are the tables showing the level of each dimension of principals' leadership attributes and school effectiveness.

**Table 2: Level of School Effectiveness (n = 249)**

Variables	Level	Frequency	Percent	A/mean	SD	Min	Max	Range
<b>Students' Outcomes</b>								
	Low (1.00 - 2.33)	26	10.4	3.54	.89	1	5	4
	<b>Moderate (2.34 - 3.66)</b>	104	41.8					
	High (3.67 - 5.00)	119	47.8					
<b>Teachers' Leverage</b>								
	Low (1.25 – 2.50)	52	20.9	3.46	.87	1.25	5	3.75
	<b>Moderate (2.51 – 3.75)</b>	108	43.4					
	High (3.76 – 5.00)	89	35.7					

The above table indicates the moderate level of school effectiveness, which is identified by determining the level of each of its dimensions (Students' outcome and teachers' leverage). The mean and standard deviation of Students' outcome is 3.54 and .89 respectively, the average mean value is within the moderate level, which is (2.34 - 3.66). The mean and standard deviation of teachers' leverage is 3.46 and .87 respectively, the average mean value is within the moderate level, which is (2.34 - 3.66).

## DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

According to the findings, there is a moderate level of principals' leadership attributes and school effectiveness in the study as perceived by the experienced teachers of the Niger state secondary schools. This means that, experienced teachers are familiar with the level of principals' leadership attributes and can envision the level of school effectiveness. The level of four dimensions of principals' leadership attributes has been measured, namely; Engagement, System Thinking, leading learning, and self-awareness. The dimensions have been measured through its items. All the dimensions are at a moderate level. This indicated that, an increase or decrease in the level of principals' leadership attributes may lead to the increase or decreases in school effectiveness.

Therefore the result shows that, the level of principals' leadership attributes envisions the level of school effectiveness as perceived by the experienced teachers in Niger state secondary schools. This is line of the study of Hallinger; which emphasized that, principals' leadership contributes to school effectiveness (Hallinger, 2005). There is a need to improve the level of principals' leadership attributes, so that the level of school effectiveness may also rise to some certain level. This finding may provide the substratum of creating the learning techniques that may lead to the acquisition of such leadership attributes by the principals, thus may lead to the increase in the level of principals' leadership attributes and overcomes the challenges facing the principals (Hallinger, 1998; Leithwood, 2006).

Leadership attributes are subject to learning, therefore leadership learning environment should be created to equip the school principals with those desirable leadership attributes, thus may increase the level of principals' leadership attributes and thereby increasing the level of school effectiveness (Adeyemi & Bolarinwa, 2013). Therefore, the essentiality behind improving the level of principals' leadership attributes is to improve the level of school effectiveness, this is because for every successful school, there must be successful principals' leadership behind it (Kelley et al, 2005).

Principals' leadership attributes can also be implanted in the leadership education programmers to prepare principals towards knowing the techniques of overcoming the challenging that can serve as a barrier towards improving school effectiveness in Niger state. Professional leadership training should be given high priority in the state rather than training teachers only, this is because with the professional training of the principals; enhances them to acquire such leadership attributes (Arikewuyo, 2009). Furthermore, principals should be dealt as exceptional groups to enable them to acquire the necessary leadership attributes needed by them. This paper focused only on measuring the level of principals' leadership attributes and the level of school effectiveness. It is suggested that, further research should measure the association between the principals' leadership attributes and school effectiveness; this may assist to find out whether principals' leadership attributes may predict school effectiveness. Qualitative approach should be incorporated; this will assist the experienced teachers to effectively assess the leadership attributes of their respective principals on their own expressions.

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